



Bandongan and Sorogan as Epistemic Practices: Reconstructing Islamic Literacy beyond Cognitive Formalism

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Abstract

This study addresses the epistemological crisis in contemporary Islamic education, characterized by the dominance of cognitive formalism that reduces literacy to technical and measurable competencies while neglecting its spiritual and intellectual dimensions. Existing global scholarship on literacy and Islamic education largely positions pesantren traditions, particularly bandongan and sorogan, as sociocultural phenomena rather than as sources of epistemological theory. This indicates a significant theoretical gap in understanding how these practices function as systems of knowledge formation. This research aims to reconstruct Islamic literacy by conceptualizing bandongan and sorogan as epistemic practices. Employing a conceptual-normative literature review with epistemological and pedagogical approaches, the study analyzes classical Islamic texts, contemporary educational theories, and relevant policy documents. The analysis is conducted through systematic literature mapping, conceptual coding, and comparative epistemological interpretation. The findings reveal that bandongan and sorogan constitute integrated epistemological systems that combine textual authority, sanad-based knowledge transmission, and spiritual discipline (*riyāḍah*) in shaping the scholarly reasoning of santri. These practices operate not merely as instructional methods but as coherent frameworks that unify intellectual rigor and ethical formation. The novelty of this study lies in reframing traditional pesantren pedagogies as epistemic practices, thereby positioning them as a theoretical contribution to global literacy discourse. The study implies that integrating these traditional epistemic elements into modern educational systems can provide a more holistic model of literacy that bridges the divide between knowledge, ethics, and spirituality.

Keywords: Islamic epistemology; traditional literacy; bandongan; sorogan;

Islamic education

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji krisis epistemologis dalam pendidikan Islam kontemporer yang ditandai oleh dominasi formalisme kognitif, yaitu reduksi literasi menjadi sekadar kompetensi teknis dan terukur, sehingga mengabaikan dimensi spiritual dan intelektual. Literatur global mengenai studi literasi dan pendidikan Islam cenderung menempatkan tradisi pesantren, khususnya bandongan dan sorogan, hanya sebagai fenomena sosiokultural, bukan sebagai sumber teori epistemologis. Hal ini menunjukkan adanya kesenjangan teoretis dalam memahami bagaimana praktik tersebut berfungsi sebagai sistem pembentukan pengetahuan. Penelitian ini bertujuan merekonstruksi literasi Islam dengan mengkonseptualisasikan bandongan dan sorogan sebagai praktik epistemik. Metode yang digunakan adalah kajian literatur konseptual-normatif dengan pendekatan epistemologis dan pedagogis, melalui pemetaan literatur sistematis, pengkodean konseptual, dan analisis komparatif epistemologis terhadap teks klasik, teori pendidikan modern, dan dokumen kebijakan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa bandongan dan sorogan merupakan sistem epistemologis yang terintegrasi, yang menggabungkan otoritas teks, transmisi pengetahuan berbasis sanad, dan disiplin spiritual (riyāḍah) dalam membentuk nalar keilmuan santri. Praktik ini tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai metode pembelajaran, tetapi sebagai kerangka epistemik yang menyatukan ketajaman intelektual dan pembentukan etika. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada penempatan pedagogi pesantren sebagai praktik epistemik, sehingga memberikan kontribusi teoretis bagi diskursus literasi global. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi elemen epistemik tradisional ke dalam sistem pendidikan modern dapat menghasilkan model literasi yang lebih holistik, dengan menjembatani hubungan antara pengetahuan, etika, dan spiritualitas.

Kata Kunci: epistemologi Islam; literasi tradisional; bandongan; sorogan; pendidikan Islam

Introduction

Contemporary literacy studies and Islamic education are currently in the midst of a profound epistemological crisis as a consequence of the hegemonization of modern, secular literacy paradigms. This phenomenon, often identified as the "desacralization of knowledge," has led to a disconnection between the process of knowledge acquisition and the dimensions of spirituality and morality.¹ In the modern educational context,

¹ Ahmad Suhendra Indrawan Cahyadi Ahmad Yunani, Muhammad Dachlan, "The Sociology of Knowledge in Pesantren: Sanad, Sorogan-Bandongan, and the Making of Intellectual Authority," *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.211154/altahrir.v25i2.10952>; Wahdatun Nisa A. Afifuddin M. Tajuddin, "Strengthening Counter-Terrorism Religious Moderation through Traditional Islamic

literacy is frequently reduced to a mere technical skill for reading and writing material symbols, whereas, in the Islamic tradition, literacy is a process of *ta'dib* or the cultivation of *adab* that integrates the intellect and the heart.¹ Consequently, Islamic educational institutions often find themselves trapped in a cognitive formalism that prioritizes competency test results over the formation of character and deep intellectual wisdom.²

The academic and pedagogical urgency to reconstruct traditional Islamic literacy has become crucial in the search for global epistemic alternatives capable of addressing the modern human crisis. Traditional literacy practices such as *bandongan* and *sorogan* offer an educational model that focuses not only on textual mastery but also on the formation of personal integrity through intensive teacher-student relationships.³ This reconstruction is vital for repositioning the Islamic intellectual tradition as an active contributor to global educational discourse, rather than merely a static historical legacy.⁴ By re-excavating its epistemological roots, Islamic education can offer a paradigm that balances critical rationality with transcendental spirituality.⁵

Mapping global scholarship indicates a persistent imbalance in literacy and educational epistemology studies, where dominant frameworks are largely shaped by secular and positivistic paradigms that prioritize measurable competencies, institutional validation, and empirical outputs. Scholars such as Brian Street and James Paul Gee, for instance, conceptualize literacy primarily as a sociocultural and cognitive practice, with limited engagement with transcendental or spiritual dimensions of knowledge. While these frameworks have significantly advanced literacy studies, they tend to underrepresent the role of spirituality, ethical formation, and metaphysical authority that are central to Islamic educational traditions.

Education Based on Kitab Kuning Literacy at Pesantren Ma'had Aly in South Sulawesi," *Jurnal Adabiya*, ahead of print, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.24252/jad.v23i2a7>.

² Zulfa Rahmat Hidayati et al., "Epistemologi Ilmu Pengetahuan: Pengertian, Ruang Lingkup, Dan Implikasinya Dalam Konteks Keilmuan Modern," *Jurnal Riset Rumpun Agama Dan Filsafat* 4, no. 3 (2025): 549–64, <https://doi.org/10.55606/jurrafi.v4i3.7228>.

³ Ali Akbar and Hidayatullah Ismail, "Metode Pembelajaran Kitab Kuning Di Pondok Pesantren Daarun Nahdhah Thawalib Bangkinang," *Al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman* 17, no. 1 (2018): 21–32.

⁴ Moh Azharul Kholili and Abdul Mu'id, "Integration of Reading and Writing Literacy in Islamic Education Learning to Develop Student Competencies," *Nidhomiyyah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2025): 73–85.

⁵ Imas Muslimah, "Kepemimpinan Kiyai Pondok Pesantren," *Jurnal Isema: Islamic Educational Management* 1, no. 2 (2016).

In the context of Islamic education, several empirical studies published in international journals demonstrate that *pesantren* are frequently analyzed through sociopolitical, institutional, or radicalism-related lenses, rather than as sources of epistemological theory. For example, research by Martin van Bruinessen and Zamakhsyari Dhofier predominantly frames *pesantren* as socio-religious institutions characterized by their structural elements and cultural roles, rather than examining their internal mechanisms of knowledge production. As a result, traditional literacy practices such as *bandongan* and *sorogan* are often treated as localized pedagogical techniques, lacking theoretical recognition within global educational discourse.⁶

At the national level in Indonesia, this tendency is even more evident. Foundational works such as Zamakhsyari Dhofier in *The Tradition of Pesantren*, Martin van Bruinessen in *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren*, dan *Tarekat*, and Abdurrahman Wahid in his writings on *pesantren* culture, largely describe *pesantren* through its well-known structural components, *kyai*, *santri*, *pondok*, *masjid*, and *kitab kuning*. While these works are foundational, their analytical focus remains predominantly descriptive and sociological, with limited elaboration on the epistemological processes underlying knowledge transmission, such as validation mechanisms, formation of *adab*, and the integration of spiritual discipline.⁷

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⁶ Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab kuning, pesantren, dan tarekat: tradisi-tradisi Islam di Indonesia* (Mizan, 1995); Virdika Rizky Utama Atiqotul Fitriyah Novi Diah Haryanti, Indah Fadhillah, "Gender Dynamics and Digital Literacy in Pesantren Creative Writing," *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, ahead of print, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v22i2.1747>.

⁷ S. Sudarno Wakib Kurniawan, "The Effectiveness of the Bandongan Method in Enhancing Comprehension of Kitab Kuning," *EDUSOSHUM Journal of Islamic Education and Social Humanities*, ahead of print, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.52366/edusoshum.v5i3.249>.

metaphysical authority that are central to Islamic educational traditions.⁸

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The theoretical relevance of *bandongan* and *sorogan* within the Islamic epistemological tradition can be understood in terms of their capacity to integrate multiple sources of knowledge revelation (*naql*), reason (*'aql*), and disciplined intuition (*irfānī*) within a structured pedagogical setting. In this context, these practices are closely associated with the concepts of *sanad* (scholarly lineage) and *riyāḍah* (spiritual discipline), which function as epistemic and ethical mechanisms for ensuring the continuity, reliability, and internalization of knowledge.

Rather than assuming a complete separation between science and ethics, this study argues more cautiously that contemporary educational frameworks often underemphasize specific ethical dimensions, particularly those related to the formation of adab, responsibility toward authoritative sources, and the moral discipline required in the learning process. In contrast, *bandongan* and *sorogan* explicitly embed these ethical principles within their epistemic structure, where the teacher's role is not only to transmit knowledge but also to guide its ethical appropriation.¹⁰

Rather than proposing a comprehensive transformation of educational systems, this study more realistically positions its contribution as providing a theoretical framework that may inform future scholarly inquiry and

⁸ Loso Judijanto et al., "Global and Local Collaboration in Islamic Education Literacy Research," *West Science Social and Humanities Studies* 3, no. 01 (2025): 173–83, <https://doi.org/10.58812/wssshs.v3i01.1646>.

⁹ Muhammad Fakhrudin Al-Razi et al., "Reconstructing the Islamic Education Paradigm in Indonesia," *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan* 22, no. 2 (2024): 294–310, <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v22i2.1918>.

¹⁰ Fuadi Mardatillah et al., "Epistemological Reconstruction of Islamic Education: Developing a Transformative Pedagogical Model to Foster Creativity," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, no. 2 (2025): 1071–94, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v13i2.2200>.

educational reflection. In this regard, the model offers a conceptual basis for educators and policymakers to reconsider the role of tradition, not as an obstacle to modernization, but as a potential resource for developing more contextually grounded and ethically informed literacy practices.

Analytically, the study suggests that the integration of elements such as *sanad*, *riyāḍah*, *adab*, and linguistic discipline may contribute to the formation of a more holistic model of literacy, combining intellectual rigor with ethical awareness. However, the application of this framework in contemporary curricula remains context-dependent and requires further empirical validation. Within these limits, this study contributes to ongoing efforts to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity in Islamic education, while maintaining fidelity to authentic scholarly authority.¹¹

Method

This study employs a conceptual research design grounded in the epistemology of Islamic education. The approach is selected because the object of analysis is theoretical and philosophical, focusing on the construction of knowledge, authority, and scholarly reasoning within the *pesantren* tradition. Rather than conducting a systematic review, this study adopts a purposeful and theory-driven selection of sources to develop a coherent epistemological framework. Sources were curated through selective and iterative reading, prioritizing: (1) classical Islamic texts on pedagogy and knowledge transmission (e.g., *kitab turats*), (2) contemporary scholarly works on Islamic education and literacy published in reputable international journals, and (3) relevant educational policy documents. The selection criteria were based on conceptual relevance, theoretical contribution, and epistemological significance, rather than exhaustive database coverage. Sources that were purely descriptive, lacked analytical depth, or were not directly related to knowledge formation and literacy practices were excluded.¹²

The analytical process was conducted in three stages. First, conceptual extraction was applied to identify key epistemic elements within *bandongan*

¹¹ Mita Asmira, "The Role of Information Technology in Teaching English to Islamic Higher Education Learners: Assessing Digital Literacy Skills," *English Language and Literature in Education Journal* 2, no. 2 (2024): 74–88.

¹² Novia Rosyidah Hidayati Ali, "Islamic Religious Education Learning in Elementary School Plus at Islamic Boarding School," *Tarsib: Jurnal Program Studi PGMI*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.61181/tarsib.v2i2.388>.

and *sorogan* practices, such as authority, validation, and ethical formation. Second, these elements were organized through thematic synthesis to construct relationships between *sanad*, *riyāḍah*, and *adab* as core dimensions of Islamic knowledge systems. Third, a normative-epistemological interpretation was undertaken to formulate a structured model of Islamic literacy that integrates traditional pedagogical practices with contemporary educational demands.¹³ The outcome of this methodology is not a descriptive account, but a theoretical model articulated through analytical propositions, explaining how traditional literacy practices function as epistemic systems in shaping knowledge authority and scholarly habitus. This approach enables the study to move beyond narrative description toward a systematic reconstruction of Islamic literacy within a coherent epistemological framework.¹⁴

The unit of analysis in this research is the pedagogical practices of *bandongan* and *sorogan*, viewed as "epistemic units" or systems of knowledge formation. The analysis is focused on how these two methods function as social and intellectual mechanisms in constructing the authority of *ulama* and the scholarly identity of *santri*. Furthermore, this research analyzes the link between these pedagogical practices and the concept of *riyāḍah* as an epistemological instrument connecting the spiritual dimension with the intellectual learning process. This unit of analysis includes the interaction between the text (*kitab kuning*), the teacher (*kyai*), and the student (*santri*) within the scope of the *pesantren*.¹⁵

Data sources are categorized into primary and secondary sources to ensure the depth and validity of the analysis. Primary sources include classical texts (*kitab turats*) on Islamic pedagogy, as well as contemporary

¹³ Zakariyah M. Khoiruddin M. Ridlwan Nasir, "The Sorogan Method in Pesantren Education: Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Learning Outcomes," *Indonesian Values and Character Education Journal*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.23887/ivcej.v8i2.101405>; Ulfi Aminatuz Zahroh Syamsudin Wahono Widodo, Endang Susantini, "Implementation Of Baḥsul Masā'il In Developing College Students' Critical Thinking Skills Through Science Education At Pesantren," *International Journal of Environmental Science*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.64252/vf9drb10>.

¹⁴ Ahmad Suhendra Indrawan Cahyadi Ahmad Yunani, Muhammad Dachlan, "The Sociology of Knowledge in Pesantren: Sanad, Sorogan-Bandongan, and the Making of Intellectual Authority," *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.21154/altahrir.v25i2.10952>.

¹⁵ Taufiqurrahman Taufiqurrahman et al., "Problematika Pesantren Dan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam," *TSAQOFAH* 6, no. 1 (2025): 242–55, <https://doi.org/10.58578/tsaqofah.v6i1.8075>.

Islamic education policy documents. Secondary sources involve reputable scientific journal articles, educational theory books, and bibliometric research results regarding trends in Islamic character education. The use of data from various academic databases allows for a comprehensive mapping of the intellectual landscape regarding the position of traditional literacy in global discourse.¹⁶

Data collection techniques were carried out through systematic literature searches, thematic mapping, and conceptual coding. The systematic search used relevant keywords to identify literature that met the inclusion criteria. Thematic mapping was performed using bibliometric software like Biblioshiny to visualize the knowledge structure and research trends over the last ten years. Conceptual coding was applied to categorize the literature based on key themes such as intellectual authority, *sanad* transmission, and the integration of spirituality in education.¹⁷

The data analysis techniques used include hermeneutic, epistemological, and comparative analysis. Hermeneutic analysis is used to interpret classical texts and policy documents within their historical context and underlying values. Epistemological analysis aims to unpack the basic assumptions regarding the acquisition and validation of knowledge in the *bandongan* and *sorogan* methods. Finally, comparative analysis is conducted to compare the traditional literacy model with modern educational paradigms to identify integration points and the potential for reconstructing a holistic Islamic literacy model.¹⁸

¹⁶ Bruinessen, *Kitab kuning, pesantren, dan tarekat*.

¹⁷ Mulyana Abdullah E. Suresman Achmad Faqihuddin, Jenuri, "From Sorogan to Digital Learning: A Systematic Literature Network Analysis of Pesantren Learning Models," *Cogent Education*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2580776>; M. Zaini Agus Purwowododo, "Developing a Value-Based Moderate Islamic Education Model: A Case Study of Pesantren Sidogiri Pasuruan," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)*, ahead of print, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.15642/jpai.2024.12.1.43-62>; Anis Susanti Zainuddin Zainuddin Aidah Aidah, Mustafiyanti Mustafiyanti, "Reconstruction of Pesantren Education, Analyzing Independent Curriculum in Transforming Islamic Education in Indonesia," *Al-Munawwarah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.35964/munawwarah.v17i1.387>.

¹⁸ Dia Fathul Jannah et al., "Kitab Kuning: Metode Sorogan Dan Bandongan Di Pondok Pesantren," *An Najah (Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Sosial Keagamaan)* 4, no. 4 (2025): 225–30; Muhammad Yusuf Salam et al., "Tradisi Keilmuan Pesantren Melalui Integrasi Sorogan Dan Bandongan Dalam Pembelajaran Kitab Kuning Di Sumatera Barat," *At-Tasyrih: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Hukum Islam* 11, no. 2 (2025): 27–46; Anwar Hafidzi, "The Ability Of Islamic Boarding School Students In Facing The Digital Literacy Era With Critical Reading," *IJGIE*

Findings and Discussion

Traditional Literacy Practices in Classical Islamic Education

The main findings in this section indicate that *bandongan* and *sorogan* are highly structured and hierarchical literacy systems tailored to the intellectual development level of the *santri*. *Bandongan* serves as a collective learning method where the teacher reads and provides *syarah* (explanation) for the text, while *sorogan* is an individual method where the *santri* reads the text before the teacher to be corrected in detail.¹⁹ The primary character of both practices is their emphasis on loyalty to classical texts (*kitab kuning*) alongside the maintenance of intellectual authority through personal proximity between the educator and the student.

Conceptually, these practices cannot be understood merely as instructional techniques; they must be seen as a complete literacy system integrating linguistic mastery, textual analysis, and the cultivation of spiritual values. Literacy in the *pesantren* context goes beyond the ability to read words; it includes the ability to understand the "inner language" of the text and connect it with the broader scholarly tradition. The position of *bandongan* and *sorogan* as a literacy system is affirmed by their role in creating a unique "intellectual habitus" that combines the golden tradition of Islam with local social dynamics.

Detailed descriptions of these pedagogical mechanisms show that in *bandongan*, the *kyai* often uses local languages (such as Javanese or Sundanese) written in the *Pegon* script to translate Arabic texts, creating an epistemic bridge between the language of revelation and the cultural reality of the *santri*. On the other hand, *sorogan* requires the *santri* to master instrumental sciences such as *nahwu* (syntax) and *sharaf* (morphology) very meticulously, as a small error in reading *harakat* can change the legal meaning of the text. This textual mechanism is reinforced by the use of supporting literature such as *syarah* and *hasyiah*, which allow for internal discourse and critique within a framework of preserved tradition.²⁰

(*International Journal of Graduate of Islamic Education*) 1, no. 2 (2020): 141–53, <https://doi.org/10.37567/ijgie.v1i2.231>.

¹⁹ Nurul Indana and Ali Mustofa, "The Concept of Islamic Education in the Perspective of Imam Al Ghazali and Its Relevance in the Contemporary Era," *Urwatul Wutsqo: Jurnal Studi Kependidikan Dan Keislaman* 13, no. 2 (2024): 242–56, <https://doi.org/10.54437/urwatulwutsqo.v13i2.1351>.

²⁰ Donald C. Orlich and S. Samuel Shermis, "Educational Philosophy as Mythology: A Critical Analysis of School Philosophies," *International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale de l'Education* 14, no. 1 (1968): 102–7.

Epistemic Factors Shaping Scholarly Reasoning

The primary epistemic factors shaping the scholarly reasoning of *santri* in this tradition are the integration of *sanad* (scholarly lineage), *riyāḍah* (spiritual discipline), and *adab* (ethics). *Sanad* serves as a guarantee of the authenticity of knowledge, ensuring that the *santri*'s understanding is authoritatively linked back to the text's author and the Prophet, providing intellectual legitimacy that formal modern education systems lack. Additionally, *riyāḍah* is viewed as an epistemological instrument to purify the heart so it is capable of receiving the light of knowledge, as in the Islamic view, true knowledge is not just information but divine guidance.²¹

The affirmation of the relationship between these factors and scholarly reasoning is seen in how *santri* develop deep interpretive abilities through oral and written interaction with the teacher. The *sorogan* method, for example, forces the *santri* to engage in critical dialogue with the text under the strict supervision of the *kyai*, which trains sharpness of reasoning in performing *istinbat* (legal inference). Spiritual factors such as sincerity and devotion to the teacher are also considered to influence the quality of intellectual understanding, where the blessing (*barakah*) of knowledge is believed to accelerate the mastery of difficult materials.

A critical analysis of modern literacy shows that educational systems focusing solely on cognitive and empirical dimensions tend to produce intellectuality that is spiritually "dry" and morally fragmented. Modern literacy often ignores the aspects of metaphysics and intuition, which in the *pesantren* tradition are the main foundations of intellectual wisdom.²² The reduction of knowledge to a mere economic commodity in the modern paradigm contrasts sharply with the *pesantren* tradition, which views knowledge as a divine trust demanding transcendental responsibility.

Reconstructing an Islamic Epistemological Literacy Model

The Islamic epistemological literacy model reconstructed in this study proposes a synthesis between the strength of classical orthodoxy and modern contextual responsiveness. This model emphasizes the importance of

²¹ Rizal Fathurrohman et al., "The Epistemology of Riyāḍah in Pesantren: A Philosophical Foundation for Islamic Intellectual Formation," *Scaffolding Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme* 7, no. 3 (2025): 301–20.

²² Nur Ihsan et al., "BRIDGING THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL DIVIDE: ARSYAD AL-BANJARI'S MA'RIFAH AS A RESPONSE TO WESTERN EPISTEMOLOGICAL DILEMMAS," *Al-Qalam* 31 (June 2025): 71–84, <https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v31i1.1596>. Khojir Khojir, "Membangun Paradigma Ilmu Pendidikan Islam: Kajian Ontologi, Epistemologi Dan Aksiologi," *Dinamika Ilmu* 11, no. 1 (2011).

removing the dichotomy between religious and general sciences by promoting "epistemological universalism," which sees all knowledge as originating from the single source, Allah SWT. Findings indicate that integrating traditional methods with modern learning strategies such as critical thinking, digital literacy, and problem-based learning can create a more flexible and adaptive educational system.²³

This synthesis of conceptual findings produces a framework that positions literacy as a process of forming the whole human being (*insan kamil*), rather than just preparing a workforce. This reconstruction involves using *bandongan* and *sorogan* as the foundation for textual authority, which is then developed through dialogical discussion (*syawir*) to address contemporary issues such as digital ethics, social justice, and environmental sustainability.¹¹ The model offers a "progressive academic identity," where a *santri* remains faithful to traditional roots yet is capable of competing on the global stage.²⁴

This reconstructive conceptual model has implications for curriculum policy, where the teaching of traditional instrumental sciences (*nahwu, sharaf, manthiq*) must be organically integrated with modern social and natural sciences.²⁵ This transformation demands the role of the teacher not just as an instructional facilitator, but as an "epistemic mediator" capable of connecting Islamic ethical values with modern professional demands. By implementing this model, Islamic educational institutions can overcome intellectual identity crises and contribute tangibly to building a society that is both knowledgeable and civilized.²⁶

Islamic Literacy beyond Cognitive Formalism: The Epistemic Role of *Bandongan* and *Sorogan*

The findings demonstrate that *bandongan* and *sorogan* constitute a coherent epistemological system rather than merely traditional instructional techniques. As shown in Sections 1 and 2, these practices operate through a

²³ Judijanto et al., "Global and Local Collaboration in Islamic Education Literacy Research."

²⁴ Taufiqurrahman et al., "Problematika Pesantren Dan Lembaga Pendidikan Islam." Asrori S. Karni, *Etos studi kaum santri: wajah baru pendidikan Islam* (PT Mizan Publik, 2009); Anwar Hafidzi, "Cultural Education As An Effort To Prevent Religious-Based Radicalism On Social Media In Indonesia," *Potret Pemikiran* 24, no. 1 (2020): 58–70.

²⁵ Ismaidar et al., "Reconstruction of Educational Qualifications for Members of the House of Representatives and DPRD in the Election Law," *International Journal of Health, Economics, and Social Sciences (IJHESS)* 7, no. 1 (2025): 108–113-108–113, <https://doi.org/10.56338/ijhess.v7i1.6436>.

²⁶ Al-Razi et al., "Reconstructing the Islamic Education Paradigm in Indonesia."

structured hierarchy of text, authority, and ethical formation that systematically shapes the scholarly reasoning of *santri*. Loyalty to classical texts (*kitab kuning*), combined with close teacher–student proximity, functions as a mechanism for preserving interpretive accuracy while fostering intellectual discipline. This challenges prevailing assumptions that position *Pesantren* literacy as static or incompatible with intellectual development.

A summary of the main findings shows that the traditional literacy practices of *pesantren*, particularly *bandongan* and *sorogan*, possess a sophisticated epistemological structure capable of forming the scholarly reasoning of *santri* holistically. Contrary to assumptions positioning *Pesantren* as stagnant institutions, this research finds that these traditional methods are actually engines for producing intellectual authority that is highly adaptive through the mechanism of *sanad* and the tradition of text interpretation.²⁷ The integration of the spiritual dimension (*riyāḍah*) and the intellectual dimension is proven to be a key factor in maintaining the integrity of knowledge amidst the current of desacralization affecting modern education.

Contextualizing these findings within global and Islamic scopes indicates that the epistemological crisis experienced by Muslims today is part of a broader challenge against the dominance of the secular-positivistic paradigm. In various parts of the world, there are efforts to decolonize curricula and seek alternatives to educational models that are overly market-oriented. *Pesantren* literacy practices offer a model of "contextualized modernity," where technological advancement and modern science do not have to eliminate the sacred values and authority lineages established over centuries.²⁸

²⁷ Baso Syafaruddin, "Modernization and Renewal Islamic Education in the Era of Society 5.0: A Systematic Review," *ETDC: Indonesian Journal of Research and Educational Review* 3, no. 3 (2024): 105–17, <https://doi.org/10.51574/ijrer.v3i3.1802>.

²⁸ "Religions of Peace: Principled Pacifism and Nonviolence in Modern Islam," Research Explorer The University of Manchester, accessed January 6, 2026, <https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/projects/religions-of-peace-principled-pacifism-and-nonviolence-in-modern-/>.

The integration of *sanad*, *riyāḍah*, and *adab* emerges as a defining epistemic configuration distinguishing traditional Islamic literacy from modern secular paradigms. *Sanad* provides epistemic legitimacy through continuity of transmission, while *riyāḍah* operates as an internal condition that refines cognitive receptivity and ethical awareness. *Adab* regulates interpretive conduct, ensuring that knowledge production remains morally accountable. Together, these elements explain why *Pesantren* literacy produces forms of reasoning that are intellectually rigorous yet ethically grounded, in contrast to modern literacy models that privilege cognitive efficiency while marginalizing metaphysical and moral dimensions.

The epistemological interpretation of these research results points to the need for a redefinition of the concept of "literacy" itself. Islamic literacy must not be understood merely as the technical ability to read and write, but as the process of *Tadabbur* profound reflection on the signs of Allah both written (*qauliyah*) and spread across the universe (*kauniyah*).²⁹ Within this framework, the *sorogan* method is understood as a form of epistemic guidance ensuring interpretive accuracy, while *bandongan* serves as a means for collective thought socialization that maintains traditional continuity.³⁰

The reconstructed Islamic epistemological literacy model proposed in Section 3 offers a synthesis between classical orthodoxy and contemporary contextual demands. By positioning *bandongan* and *sorogan* as foundations of textual authority and integrating them with dialogical practices and modern learning strategies, the model avoids the dichotomy between religious and general sciences. This epistemological universalism enables Islamic education to remain rooted in revelation while engaging critically with digital literacy, social issues, and global knowledge systems. Rather than producing market-oriented competence alone, the model reorients literacy toward the formation of holistic intellectual identity and social responsibility.

Overall, the discussion affirms that traditional *Pesantren* literacy represents a viable epistemic alternative to secular-positivistic education. By

²⁹ Eti Hadiati, "Information Literacy Empowerment in Islamic Education: Examining the Potential in the Indonesian Context," *KnE Social Sciences*, ahead of print, April 4, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.18502/KSS.V9I12.15878>.

³⁰ Orlich and Shermis, "Educational Philosophy as Mythology."

redefining literacy as *tadabbur* this study positions Pesantren as epistemological laboratories capable of contributing meaningfully to contemporary debates on education, knowledge authority, and curriculum reconstruction in Muslim societies.

The theoretical and pedagogical meaning of this reconstruction is the emergence of an educational paradigm focusing on "forming *adab*" as a prerequisite for "achieving knowledge". Pedagogically, this demands a shift from content-centered learning toward learning centered on transformative teacher-student relationships.³¹

Traditional literacy theory provides a foundation for developing educational evaluation models that measure not only cognitive achievement but also spiritual growth and the character maturity of students.³²

Comparison with previous studies shows that this research goes further than the descriptive sociological-historical accounts of *Pesantren* commonly found. While earlier research highlighted *Pesantren* as an institution of resistance or a subculture, this research positions *Pesantren* as an epistemological laboratory with a rigorous and tested methodology for knowledge transmission. Furthermore, this study provides a stronger theoretical basis for the Islamization of knowledge movement by offering a practical-methodological framework based on the literacy traditions of the Archipelago.

The theoretical, practical, and policy implications of this research are vast. Theoretically, it enriches the discourse on the epistemology of Islamic education with the concept of "traditional epistemic practices." Practically, teachers and *Pesantren* managers can use this model to innovate the curriculum without feeling inferior to modern educational standards. At the policy level, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Islamic education policymakers need to formulate more inclusive quality standards that recognize the uniqueness of traditional methods as indicators of intellectual and moral excellence, rather than as obstacles to modernization.

³¹ Fathoni, "Typology of 21st Century Islamic Boarding School Education (Pesantren) in Indonesia," *Jurnal Multidisiplin Madani* 3, no. 11 (2023): 2253–61, <https://doi.org/10.55927/mudima.v3i11.6873>.

³² Al-Razi et al., "Reconstructing the Islamic Education Paradigm in Indonesia."

The main synthesis of this research confirms that traditional literacy practices, *bandongan* and *sorogan*, are vital epistemological foundations for the survival of Islamic intellectual identity. Through the integration of classical textual authority, authoritative *sanad* transmission, and the spiritual discipline of *riyāḍah*, these methods successfully form scholarly reasoning in *santri* that is not only logically sharp but also firmly rooted in transcendental ethical values. The scholarly contribution of this research lies in the formulation of an Islamic literacy model that is reconstructive, offering a solution to educational dichotomy and the cognitive formalism that has long constrained modern Muslim education systems. This research proves that the *Pesantren* tradition possesses an independent and sophisticated educational methodology capable of making significant contributions to global pedagogical discourse.

The epistemological and methodological reflection of this study shows that understanding Islamic education requires an approach that goes beyond the narrow paradigm of empiricism. The use of the conceptual-normative method has allowed us to excavate layers of meaning behind traditional pedagogical practices, revealing how knowledge is validated and internalized within the Islamic worldview. However, challenges remain in aligning this oral-textual tradition with the digital literacy dynamics that increasingly dominate the public sphere. Therefore, future research methodologies need to explore more deeply how "inner technologies" in the Islamic tradition can be integrated with modern information technology to strengthen the transmission of sacred values.

The practical implications of this research call for systemic transformation in Islamic education policy, where *Pesantren* must be positioned as epistemologically sovereign subjects. Key recommendations include developing an integrative curriculum that provides balanced space for mastering *kitab turats* and modern science, and strengthening the capacity of educators as "spiritual-intellectual mediator" figures. Future research directions should focus on testing this reconstructive model in various different institutional contexts to map its effectiveness in forming the

character and competence of *santri* in the age of disruption. By maintaining traditional continuity amidst changing times, Islamic education will remain the main pillar in building a civilization that is both knowledgeable and morally upright.

Conclusion

This study concludes that *bandongan* and *sorogan* should be understood not merely as traditional instructional methods in *pesantren* education, but as integrated epistemic practices that reconstruct Islamic literacy beyond the limitations of cognitive formalism. In line with the research objective stated in the abstract, the findings demonstrate that these traditions function as coherent systems of knowledge formation that combine textual authority, sanad-based transmission, spiritual discipline (*riyāḍah*), and ethical cultivation (*adab*) in shaping the scholarly reasoning of *santri*. The study reveals that literacy within the *pesantren* tradition is not limited to technical reading competence, but involves the internalization of intellectual responsibility, moral awareness, and spiritual consciousness. The main synthesis of this research lies in its reconstruction of *bandongan* and *sorogan* as epistemological frameworks rather than merely sociocultural or pedagogical phenomena. This repositioning constitutes the primary novelty and scholarly contribution of the study, because it expands contemporary literacy discourse by introducing *pesantren* traditions as alternative models of holistic knowledge production capable of integrating intellect, ethics, and spirituality within Islamic education.

The implications of this study indicate that the epistemological foundations of *pesantren* traditions remain highly relevant for responding to the ethical and spiritual crisis of modern education. Theoretically, this research contributes to global discussions on literacy and Islamic education by offering a conceptual framework that bridges classical Islamic epistemology with contemporary educational paradigms. Practically, the reconstructed model encourages Islamic educational institutions and policymakers to integrate traditional epistemic elements such as *sanad*, *adab*, and *riyāḍah* with modern competencies including critical thinking, digital literacy, and contextual problem-solving. Through this integration, Islamic education may develop a more holistic literacy model that not only produces academically competent individuals, but also nurtures ethical integrity, spiritual depth, and socially responsible intellectual identities capable of

engaging contemporary global challenges.

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